

# Some factors behind Finnish educational success

“FOR BUILDING A SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE –  
CHANGES ARE STARTING TODAY”

Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialist Conference

LITEXPO 5th Feb, 2016



**Riku Honkasalo**

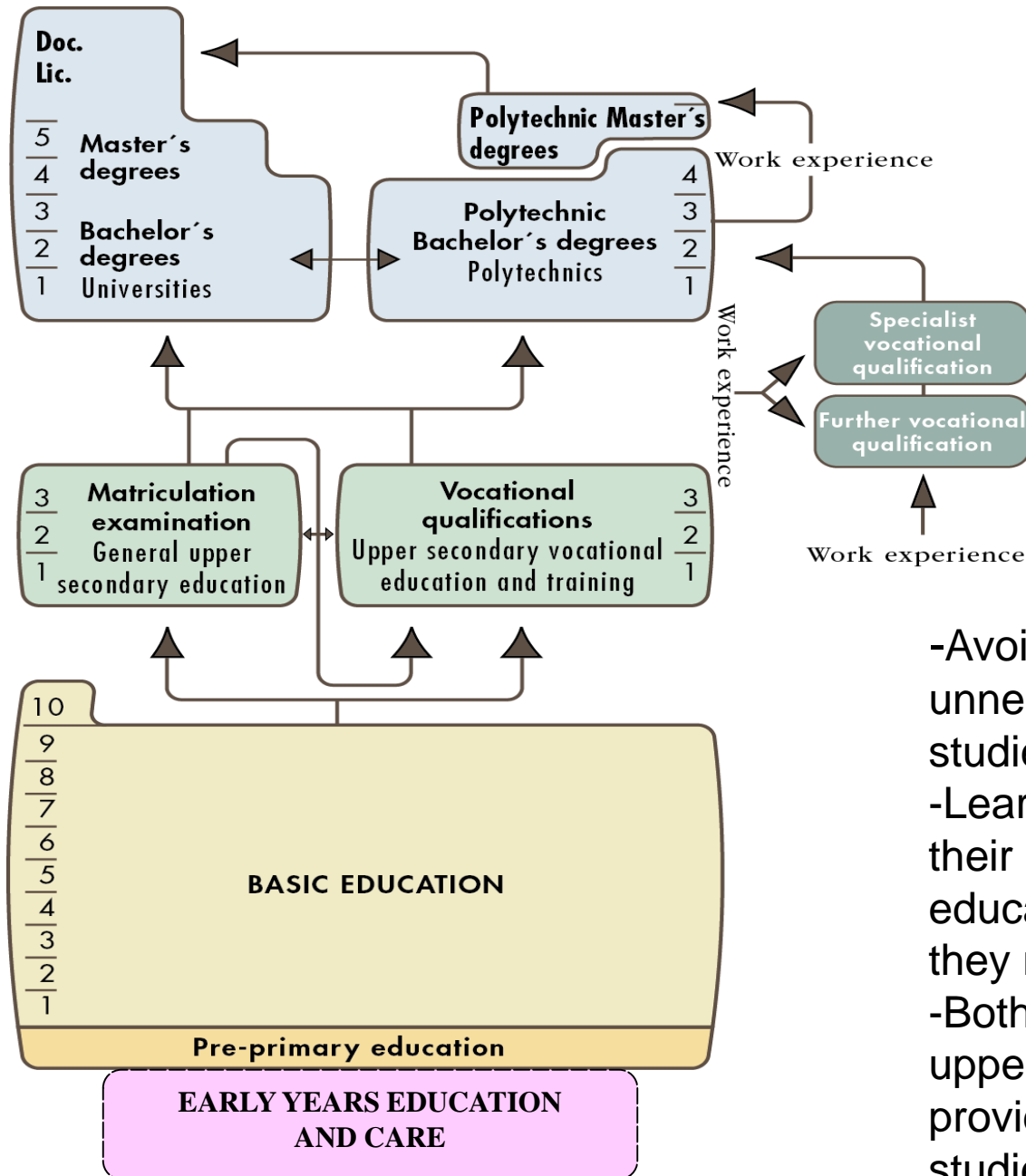
Counsellor of Education

(LOA, Finnish National Board of Education)

# Best performing countries in OECD's PISA 2000 – 2012

| 2000                                     | 2003                  | 2006                  | 2009                  | 2012                               |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>MATH</b>                              |                       |                       |                       |                                    |
| Japan 557                                | <b>1. Finland 544</b> | <b>1. Finland 548</b> | Singapore 562         | Singapore 573                      |
| Korea 547                                | Korea 542             | Korea 547             | Korea 546             | Korea 554                          |
| New Zealand 537<br><b>4. Finland 536</b> | Netherlands 538       | Netherlands 531       | <b>3. Finland 541</b> | Japan 536<br><b>8. Finland 519</b> |
| <b>READING</b>                           |                       |                       |                       |                                    |
| <b>1. Finland 546</b>                    | <b>1. Finland 543</b> | Korea 556             | Korea 539             | Singapore 542                      |
| Canada 534                               | Korea 534             | <b>2. Finland 547</b> | <b>2. Finland 536</b> | Japan 538                          |
| New Zealand 529                          | Canada 528            | Canada 527            | Canada 524            | Korea 536<br><b>4. Finland 524</b> |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>                           |                       |                       |                       |                                    |
| Korea 552                                | <b>1. Finland 548</b> | <b>1. Finland 563</b> | <b>1. Finland 554</b> | Singapore 551                      |
| Japan 550                                | 1. Japan 548          | Canada 534            | Singapore 542         | Japan 547                          |
| <b>3. Finland 538</b>                    | Korea 538             | Estonia 531           | Japan 539             | <b>3. Finland 545</b>              |

# Finnish Educational System



- Avoid & prevent dead-ends, and unnecessary overlapping of studies.
- Learners can always continue their studies on an upper level of education, whatever choices they make in between.
- Both general and vocational upper secondary certificates provide eligibility for further studies.

# Reforms in Basic Education during last 45 years

- Abolition of divided parallel and centralized education system → replaced by progressive comprehensive school (1972-1976)
- Teacher education from separate teacher colleges to universities in mid-1970s → starting point of the research-based teacher education
- Final abolition of single-sex-schools and classes
- Total abolition of school inspections and national textbook inspections
- Abolition of ability grouping in basic education (1985)
- Decentralisation of steering powers (during 1990s). Very large autonomy of local authorities (320 municipalities) how to organise schools and education process.

# The system and its features in 2016

- Systematic studying starts at the age of seven
- Year-classes 1–6 are taught by class teachers and year-classes 7–9 by specialised subject teachers.
- Education system almost entirely publicly funded, 98% of the basic education and 90% of the general upper secondary education also publicly provided. Only 0.7 per cent of pupils in basic education attend private schools.
- Drop out rate from basic education is only 0.3%. Class repetition rate in basic education is only less than 2 %
- More than 97 % with having school leaving certificate are moving directly after basic education to upper secondary level
- No national examinations or school-leaving tests in basic education.

# Possible reasons behind the success

- Principle of equity is broad national educational and social mission, same free basic education for the whole age group, small impact of socio-economic, ethnical or any other background factors.
- High quality university level teacher education (masters degree) and high attraction of teaching profession
- Curricular flexibility and pedagogical freedom for schools and large autonomy for individual teachers within the limits of the syllabuses and curricula → steering system based on mutual trust
- Neighbourhood school principle, good coverage and accessibility of basic education even in most sparsely populated areas
- Minor school markets and competition between schools, no ranking lists of schools in basic education
- Individual multilayered support (counselling, remedial teaching, SNE, well-being services) and multiprofessional teams tackling with students in danger of falling behind
- Low instruction times (4-7 hours per day), 190 school days per year, small groups and school sizes, Moderate amount of homework, No after-school private lessons or assistants needed or even offered (respect of childhood)

# Lowest instruction time within the OECD

## Average annual intended instruction time in public schools (2011)

|                | Age 7-8    | Age 9-11   | Age 12-14  |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Finland</b> | <b>608</b> | <b>683</b> | <b>829</b> |
| OECD average   | 796        | 839        | 933        |

## Small class sizes

| Class sizes             | Finland     | OECD | EU (19) |
|-------------------------|-------------|------|---------|
| Primary schools         | <b>19,8</b> | 21,5 | 20,2    |
| Upper secondary schools | <b>17,3</b> | 24,0 | 22,7    |

# Popular vocations among the youth in Finland

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Teacher</b>   | <b>26 %</b> |
| Psychologist     | 18 %        |
| Artist, musician | 18 %        |
| Architect        | 15 %        |
| Physician        | 10 %        |
| Nurse            | 9 %         |
| Priest           | 2 %         |

(Source: Finnish Gallup)



# Finnish basic education teachers in figures

- About 10-15% of applicants to class teacher education gained entrance → high motivation already at the beginning of studies
- Annual salary of a primary teacher after 15 years is little bit lower than OECD average ->prestige without high salaries
- 94 % of class teachers and 99 % of principals formally qualified
- 75 % of class teachers and 42 % of principals women
- Very strong solidarity among the profession, strong teacher associations and national trade union
- Many teachers are active in local and national politics
- Teachers are considered as the cultivators of the young nation

# Teacher education and training

- Master's degree in universities in teaching programs (takes 4-5 years, variety of disciplines, pedagogy, MA thesis)
- Research-based approach and methods on the air from the very beginning
- Including teaching training in real situations (local school or teacher training school, guided by a mentor teacher → immediate feedback)
- Target: to be constantly ready to learn new methods for their professional practice
- In-service-training and strong further training system (special national programs and extra funding from state)

# Some goals towards 21st Century Skills

- Modernize learning environments -> multiliteracy and ICT-skills
- Strengthen the roles of both informal and non-formal learning
- Problem-based instruction, phenomenon-based learning
- Thinking curriculum for all students, reinforce critical thinking / reduce rote learning
- Preparing students to live and succeed in globalised world
- Competences required for working life, understanding of entrepreneurship
- Encourage, support and better evaluate pupils with special skills and abilities



**THANK YOU!**

